Letter from Taizé

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EUROPEAN MEETING
OF YOUNG ADULTS IN PARIS

An open house

The youth of Europe will once again fill homes and church communities in Paris. Three European Meetings (1978, 1983, 1988) have already been held in Paris, so many people there know what it means to welcome young people in their homes and local church communities. Many Parisians treasure the memories they have of the previous meetings, some are still in contact with the young people who stayed with them. Several hundred people were already involved in the first preparation meetings which took place in May.

Taizé
European Meeting
of Young Adults
28 December 1994
- 1 January 1995
PARIS

At the beginning of June there will be a pilgrimage to Taizé for people of the Paris region and one of the city's auxiliary bishops will be among the pilgrims. In September, work will intensify and visits will be made to parishes of different denominations, to religious communities, to movements and to social action groups. All will be asked to welcome young Europeans for the four nights of the meeting and to prepare small groups and visits for each morning.

It will be the first European Meeting in Paris since the opening of borders between East and West. Because many more participants are expected than at the previous meetings in Paris, midday and evening prayers will be held in the exhibition halls at Porte de Versailles, which will be transformed as simply as possible into temporary cathedrals.

It's impossible to give an overview of all the diversity in the life of the Church in an area as big as Paris. These few contributions describe some aspects though:

A CHANCE TO MEET

"In our county, young adults over 20 can have difficulty in finding a regular group where they can deepen their faith and have the opportunity to reflect on their work and place in society. The groups that do exist are very small and easily disintegrate. However, for the past year, we are lucky to have had just such a group. The time of preparation for the European Meeting will give us new opportunities to come into contact with the people of the churches in our are."

NOW IT'S OUR TURN TO BE HOSTS

"Young people in Paris are often on the receiving end of invitations to go on pilgrimage — for example the pilgrimage to Lourdes for 15-18 year olds or the students' pilgrimage to Chartres. Many of us have also participated in recent European Meetings.

But now it's up to us to welcome others. I see it as a responsibility: will we be able to receive those who come to us as well as we have been welcomed these last few years? It's also an opportunity: I shall get to know my own district, and the people who are active here, much better."

MUTUAL SUPPORT

"In our diocese, Créteil, we are trying to reflect, share and celebrate together. Our bishop, who is encouraging this, writes:

"It would be dangerous to allow ourselves to become locked into interminable discussions between Christians, or absorbed by the reform of structures — structures are certainly necessary, but they are only a means. It is urgent today to bear witness to the faith, hope and charity which spring from the gospel.

"All of us have a faith which is far from perfect. The ways we approach the gospel are varied, just as the vocabularies we have about faith differ. We have much to receive from one another in order that, together, we can fulfil the responsibility we received at baptism.

"Words that pope John XXIII said about the parish express my own dream for the Church in our diocese: "the parish must be a house open to all, like a village fountain to

which everyone comes to quench their thirst."

"Central to our common commitment must be the fraternal sharing of all that which — whether it be in our faith, in the gospel or simply in our deep convictions,
• gives a meaning, and therefore a direction to our lives;
• establishes, sustains and dynamises our hope;
• impels us towards a mutual support with those around us."

It's clear that the European Meeting, particularly the morning meetings in the local church communities, corresponds to just this. We're looking forward to it, and to meeting all those who will be coming from outside."

MONTHLY PRAYER

"We live quite a way from the centre of Paris, but we shall do everything possible to help those who will be staying with us in their journeys to and fro. From experience at other European Meetings, we know that time spent in trains is not always time lost. Conversations can continue, even serious ones, despite the unusual setting. We shall certainly find families who are happy to welcome young people, indeed some of us are already talking about it to our neighbours! In our town we've started a monthly prayer which brings together people involved in different movements. Those involved in social action and caring groups have already said they are more than willing to meet with participants in the European Meeting and to share their work."

WELCOMING ONE ANOTHER

"City life makes us indifferent, as if we were in another world from those around us. There are so many pressures and demands that the easiest thing to do is to close up within ourselves. In Paris, we see other young people — who've come as tourists from all over the world — all the time. But we never meet — except when they ask the way. Thanks to the European Meeting, we'll probably learn more about just how much we can receive from one another, and I hope this will help me change my attitude."

THE MUNICH REGION

The Pilgrimage Continues

"For me and for many young people from the region of Munich, the recent European meeting gave us a lot of strength to go on. Our first preparation meeting was in the middle of September; we were about sixty people from nearly all the parishes in and outside of Dachau. After that meeting, we organized a prayer each Sunday evening in a little church. Every three weeks, we met after the prayer to talk about the preparations for the European meeting in the different parishes.

At first, it went very slowly. Each parish was very different and followed its own rhythm. One thing in everybody's mind was a possible visit to the concentration camp with the young people from different countries who would come. Some of the older people were not so happy about the idea, but they also realized that it was important for us. During the European meeting, six parishes with at least about 800 young people wanted to go there, and we only had three mornings! So we had different possibilities for the visit. There was a place of prayer in one of the churches, and then some went on a way of the cross through the whole camp. Others talked with former prisoners who are now elderly. And others went as normal visitors to the camp. The surprising thing was that from nearly every parish some of the families came with the young people to the concentration camp. It is not easy for some of the residents of Dachau to accept the fact that about two million visitors every year see only that part of our town. But we have to live with that part of our history, too, and learn from it...

In my parish, ten kilometres outside of Dachau, the biggest problem was the transport of the participants to Munich, because there is no bus at night. So we asked the mayor for help, and it was possible to organize a bus between the train station and the villages. In our parish, everyone stayed in families.

SOMETHING NEW IS BORN

Two weeks after the meeting, we invited everybody for an evening to tell about their experiences. They were all full of joy and had lots of stories. Especially the older people were very happy about the young visitors. Many times we could hear the sentence: "They were completely different than what we thought about Polish (or English, or Spanish) people." First I thought there was a bit too much enthusiasm everywhere and it would soon disappear, but that did not happen. I realized that something new has started. Even where things were already very good in a parish, the meeting bore new fruit.

Now prayers are continuing everywhere. Four months have gone by and everything is as if it were yesterday! It is as if someone came to show us the right direction and then said: now it's up to you; you are able to continue alone. And we *are* able to continue alone, even if it goes very slowly, only step by step. Sometimes we cannot see what a meeting like this really changed outside. But it's very beautiful to know that the pilgrimage is going on. I still often feel the presence of that big family, of all the friends that were here during the preparation and the meeting itself. I have realized that it is not so important that we are together all the time. We know about this reality called the Church, and it helps us a lot to go on.

From another parish, to the north of Munich, we have been sent this story:

When preparations for the European Meeting started, I wasn't sure if my longing to welcome those who came to the meeting in our little, rather isolated, town would turn out to be a real possibility. Although I often felt anxious — it's the first time I've ever been really responsible for something — I was also buoyed up by a great trusting.

For those who came to stay with us, the meeting ended on January 1st. But

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European Meeting of Young Adults in Paris

Taizé
European Meeting of Young Adults
28 December 1994 - 1 January 1995
PARIS

Just after Christmas this year, tens of thousands of young people will leave their homes in every country in Europe and set out for Paris. Families, parishes, chaplaincies and religious communities will welcome us to stay for five days. It will be the 17th consecutive year that a European Meeting has been held as a part of the "pilgrimage of trust on earth" led by the Taizé Community. Being welcomed in this way, by families and Church communities, will allow us to discover in a tangible way that peace and mutual trust are indeed possible. The regular prayer together, for which all participants gather, and the small-group meetings will renew us in our communion in God as we seek a deeper understanding of life. The European Meeting is a time in which to receive encouragement for our daily life, to help us become people of welcome and reconciliation for those who live around us.

Date: Arrive Wednesday morning, 28th December 1994 between 7am and 12 noon. Depart Sunday afternoon, 1st January 1995.

General programme: Participants will be welcomed by families and local church communities throughout the city. Morning prayer each day will be in one of the local churches of the neighbourhood where you are staying. Then meetings in small groups with other participants and with local people. Each day — midday and evening — there will be two common prayers for all participants of the meeting together. In the afternoon, workshops on various themes.

Accommodation: Simple conditions. Bring sleeping-bag and lightweight mattress. Accommodation with families, in church halls and schools, contributes a element of sharing to the whole meeting, we therefore ask groups not to arrange their own accommodation apart.

18 to 29 year olds:

- those who can help, as animators in parishes and places of accommodation, or in teams for practical task, or in the choir group, need to arrive on Monday 26th December, between 8am and 3pm. (Arrival not possible on 27th December.)
- those who arrive on 28th December choose one of three ways of taking part:
- participation in the life of parishes of the city (this is the main group)
- the silence group (has its own separate accommodation)
- while still participating in the life of a parish, helping in a team that has a practical responsibility (meal distribution, church team, choir group). It is still possible to join such a group on 28th December.

16 and 17 year olds may come to the meeting only if accompanied by group leaders over 20 years old in such a way that, for accommodation, they can separate into small groups of no more than 7 (girls and boys separate) each with a group leader. Arrival: 28th December — not before. All take part in the main group during the meeting: "participation in the life of parishes of the city".

Adults over 30: the European Meeting is intended for young adults under 30, however a few adults over this age can also come, in particular if they are leading groups of young adults. Adults over 30 all participate in the main group, and arrive on 28th December (not before). Those who cannot accept the same simple accommodation conditions as the young people and who need a "real bed" indicate this on their registration form. Those who are accompanying a group of young people are welcome to stay with them, if they will accept the same simple accommodation.

Families with children, and people with a disability who need special accommodation should contact Taizé — best by telephone in October or November — to arrange this.

The contribution to costs expected from each participant can only be given exactly in the Autumn. For young people from Britain, it will be in the region of 500-600 French Francs for the whole meeting. As well as the hire of meeting-halls and equipment, this covers all meals and a public transport pass.

Send in your registration form by 1st December at the latest. Further information will be sent in November to those who register earlier. Send the form to Taizé, either directly or through the person leading your group. Group leaders who have already announced their intention to come to the meeting and who invite people to join them include (roughly North to South):

- Rev Flora Munro, East Manse, 404 North Deeside Road, Cults, ABERDEEN, AB1 9TD Tel: (0224) 867587
- Fr Philip Marsh, Holy Ghost Fathers, 117 Newarthill Rd, Carfin, MOTHERWELL, Lanarkshire ML1 5AL Tel: (0698) 265662
- Jim Cox, 21 Vicarage Rd, Harborne, BIRMINGHAM, B17 0SN Tel: (021) 426 1318; parish office: 427 1949
- Rev Guy and Tessa Wilkinson, St. Aidan's Clergy House, 172 Herbert Road, Small Heath, BIRMINGHAM B10 0PR Tel: (021) 772 0318 (from July 20th)
- Clare Brennan, Exeter College, OXFORD, OX1 3DP
- Martin Smyth, Southwark Catholic Youth Service, "Emmaus", Layhams Rd, WEST WICKHAM, Kent BR4 9HH Tel: (081) 777 6555/0610
- Elizabeth and John Hopthrow, 146 The Street, Kingston, CANTERBURY, Kent CT4 6JQ Tel: (0227) 830070
- Matthew Koumis, 12 Arthur Road, WINCHESTER, Hants. SO23 7EA Tel. (daytime): (0962) 864546

Republic of Ireland:

- Rev Jim O'Brien, Limerick Youth Apostolate, Baile Mhuire, Foynes, Limerick Tel &Fax:(069) 65438
- Rev Martin Clarke, Catholic Youth Council, Arran Ovay, Dublin - 7 Tel: (01) 725055 Fax:(01) 725010

Travel:

- from Britain: for special coaches to the meeting (also for those who wish to arrive on 26th Dec. to help) contact Nuneaton Coaches, Whitacre Road, NUNEATON CV11 6BN. Tel: (0203) 325682 or 328410; Fax: (0203) 375875. Otherwise: sometimes cheap air-fares are available to Paris, or the tunnel...
- from other countries: write to Taizé for information.

Registration Form

Send before 1st December to:
"European Meeting", Taizé Community,
71250 TAIZÉ, France. Tel: (+33) 85.50.30.02
(9-11 am and 3.30-5.30 pm) Fax: (+33) 85.50.30.16.

First Name:

Family Name:

Address:

(with postcode and country)

Tel: ____/____ Occupation: ____ Age: ____

(Circle "Yes" or "No" or complete where necessary)

- I am coming with a group from the town of ____
  led by ____
- For adults (over 30 years) and those who cannot sleep on the floor:
  I need a bed: yes / no If "yes", say whether you are (please circle):
  woman man couple family with ... children disabled person with helper
- I will arrive on 28th December: yes / no (arrival time between 7am and 12pm)
- I will arrive on 26th December (17-30 year olds only): yes / no
  to help with (please circle): animation / work / music team.
- N.B. If, for any reason, you are arranging your own accommodation please send us the address where you will be staying.
- I would like ____ more registration forms (photocopy your own if possible)

How to read the Bible?

This question is a vital one for those who have been touched by the Word of God, for example during a week spent in Taizé, and who would like to continue their searching at home. Before looking elsewhere for methods or advice, let us see whether the Bible itself tells us how it wishes to be understood.

A valuable indication is given by the first conclusion of the Gospel according to Saint John: "Jesus worked many other signs...which are not written in this book. But these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name" (John 20,30-31).

In this text, it is obvious that the gospels—and this is true for the Bible as a whole—does not want to communicate a detached, speculative knowledge concerning the realities of God, but an understanding that leads to an act of faith. The Scriptures are not there to satisfy our curiosity, for example by offering us detailed descriptions of life after death. Nor is their purpose to furnish us with abstract answers to all our questions, for instance about the reason for human suffering.

The knowledge of God that the Bible offers us remains fragmentary ("...many other signs which are not written..."). But it is fully sufficient to achieve its essential objective: it brings us into contact with the person of Jesus Christ, so that we can discover the authentic face of God (John 1,18; 14,9) and enter into a relationship with the one Jesus calls "Father." In other words, the Bible can only be understood in an interpersonal context. It is less like a scientific textbook or a literary work than like a personal conversation. It is not by chance that most of the books of the New Testament are letters, written to create or to reinforce bonds of communion.

It has sometimes been said, and with reason, that the Bible can be compared to a letter we have received from a close friend in a language in which we are not fluent. It contains things that may seem strange or incomprehensible to us. But since we know that the writer of the letter loves us, we are not at all offended or scandalized by what we do not understand; we simply attribute it to our lack of familiarity with our friend's language. We focus on what we do understand, what is in conformity with the friend we are familiar with.

Similarly, when we find a passage or an expression in the Bible which seems to us curious, or even shocking, the only fruitful attitude is to say to ourselves that we are undoubtedly misunderstanding its true or full significance, and to start from what is clearer in order to understand what is more obscure.

But where do we find "what is clearer"? Is there a centre around which everything else can find its place? A Christian leader, writing to Jews who had become disciples of Christ, gives us the answer: "God, who spoke in times past at many times and in many different ways to our ancestors by the prophets,...has spoken to us by his Son" (Heb 1,1-2).

The life of Jesus, recapitulated in his "passover" from death to Eternity's life (John 13,1; Eph 2,4-7; Col 2,9), reveals to us the ultimate secrets of God's identity. New light is shed on what was previously partial or ambiguous: "And beginning with Moses and with all the Prophets, [the Risen Christ] interpreted for them in all the Scriptures the things referring to himself... He opened their minds that they might understand the Scriptures" (Luke 24,27.45). Starting from this centre, like a source of light radiating outward, the rest of the Bible is illuminated.

Those who wish to deepen their understanding of the Bible's message, then, would do well to begin their reading of the Bible by one of the four gospels, following the principle of explaining what is more obscure by what is clearer, the periphery by the centre. Moving on to the other writings of the New Testament, they will better grasp the significance of Christ's coming and its consequences for the life of his disciples. And they will quickly make another discovery: to understand well the life of Jesus, it has to be situated in the context of the ongoing relationship between the God of Israel and the people God chose in order to reveal his identity to the world. In other words, if it is true that the life of Jesus, viewed in the light of his resurrection, provides the key to the deepest comprehension of the Old Testament, it is equally true that a greater understanding of the latter enables us better to grasp the significance of the former.

Because the different parts of the Bible have this complex interrelationship, the process of comprehension resembles a spiral rather than a straight line. It is like a journey through a foreign country, where at first nothing is familiar. But the further one goes, the more one learns how to see correctly. And each time one goes back to texts that have already been read, their understanding is deepened by everything that has been discovered in the meantime.

Far from being a mere collection of books, the Bible is a gateway to the world of God: the unfamiliarity or "culture shock" that we experience is not just a question of different cultures and historical periods; it is the experience of people pulled out of their routines and set on the road by the eternal Newness of God. It cannot be emphasized enough that, even if a certain amount of historical or linguistic information can be useful, the Scriptures want above all to enable us to encounter a living Being, a Source of life, in order then to discover this same Reality in the concrete circumstances of our daily lives and to respond to his call.

MEDITATING ON THE WORD

SEPTEMBER

These short readings, taken from the midday prayer in Taizé, can be read several times during the day. The references indicate longer readings. If you have time to read only one, the one in bold type is suggested.

Is 63.16-64.7 **Jn 12.23-26**

1 THU You come to the help of those who gladly do right, Lord; keeping your ways reminds them of you.

Is 66.10-14 **Jn 13.31-35**

2 FRI The Lord says: I am going to send peace to my people like a river. When you see this, your heart will rejoice.

Is 66.18-20 **Jn 8.12**

3 SAT The Lord says: I am coming to gather the people of every nation and language, and they will see my glory.

Mk 7.31-37 Is 35.4-7

4 SUN Jesus took the man who was deaf and could hardly speak aside, away from the crowd. With a deep sigh, Jesus said "Ephphatha!", that is, "Be opened!". At this, the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he spoke clearly.

Ga 2.16-21 Lk 4.1-13

5 MON Paul writes: It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.

Ga 3.23-29 **Lk 4.14-22**

6 TUE You are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

Ga 4.1-7 Lk 4.22-30

7 WED God sent his Son, born of a woman, born a subject of the Law, to redeem the subjects of the Law, so that we might be adopted as God's children.

Rm 8.28-30 **Mt 1.18-23**

8 THU In all things God works for the good of those who love him, those who have been called according to his purpose.

Ga 5.22-25 Lk 4.38-41

9 FRI Since the Spirit is our life, let our actions be guided by the Spirit.

Ga 6.6-10 **Jn 14.1-6**

10 SAT The one who sows in the Spirit, will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

Mk 8.27-35 Is 50.5-9

11 SUN Jesus said: If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let them renounce themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

Ep 1.1-6 Lk 4.42-44

12 MON Cod chose us in Christ, before the world was made, to be holy and faultless before him in love.

Lk 5.1-11 Ep 1.7-10

13 TUE Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Put out into deep water and let down your nets for a catch." "Master," Simon replied, "we have worked hard all night long without catching anything, but because you say so I will let down the nets."

Ph 2.6-11 **Jn 3.13-21**

14 WED Being in every way like a human being, Christ Jesus was humbler yet, and became obedient to death, death on a cross. Therefore God raised him high and gave him the name which is above all other names.

Ep 1.11-14 Lk 5.12-16

15 THU In Christ you have heard the word of truth and the good news of your salvation. And having put your trust in it, you have received the mark of the Holy Spirit.

Ep 1.15-23 Lk 5.33-39

16 FRI May God enlighten the eyes of your heart so that you may see the hope to which he calls you.

Ep 2.1-6 **Jn 14.27**

17 SAT God is rich in merciful love. Because of the great love he has for us, he has brought us to life with Christ.

Mk 9.30-37 Ws 2.12/17-20

18 SUN Jesus said to his disciples: If anyone wants to be first, they must make themselves last of all and servant of all.

Lk 6.6-11 Ep 2.7-10

19 MON Jesus said to the man with a withered hand, "Stretch out your hand." The man did so, and his hand was restored.

Lk 6.12-19 **Ep 2.11-13**

20 TUE At that time, Jesus went up into the hills to pray and he spent the whole night praying to God.

Mt 9.9-13 Ep 4.1-6

21 WED St MATTHEW As he walked, Jesus saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office, and he said to him, "Follow me". And he got up and followed him.

Ep 2.19-22 **Lk 6.20-23**

22 THU In Christ, you are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by the Spirit.

Lk 6.27-35 Ep 3.1-6

23 FRI Jesus said: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.

Ep 3.14-21 **Lk 6.36-38**

24 SAT May Christ dwell in your hearts through faith, and may you be rooted and established in love, so that knowing the love of Christ, which is beyond all knowledge, you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Mk 9.38-43/45-48 Nb 11.25-29

25 SUN Jesus said: If anyone gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ, then in truth I tell you, they will certainly not lose their reward.

Ep 4.7-10 Lk 6.39-45

26 MON Christ descended to the depths of the earth, and he who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.

Ep 4.11-13 Lk 6.46-49

27 TUE God's people is being prepared for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God, fully mature with the fullness of Christ himself.

Lk 7.1-10 Ep 4.14-16

28 WED A centurion said to Jesus: Say the word, and my servant will be healed.

Dn 7.13-14 **Jn 1.47-51**

29 THU Daniel said: In a vision I saw one like a son of man, to whom were given authority, glory and sovereign power, and all the nations and peoples of every tongue worshipped him. His kingdom is everlasting, it will never pass away.

Ep 4.22-24 Lk 7.11-17

30 FRI Let yourselves be made new in the attitude of your minds to be clothed with the new self, which is created to be like God in justice and in holiness of the truth.

JOHANNINE HOURS

PSALM 142

Johannine hours are meant as a way of seeking God in silence and prayer in the midst of our daily life. During the course of a day, take an hour or so to read the Bible passage with the short commentary and to reflect on the questions which follow. Afterwards, a group of 3 to 10 people can meet to share what they have discovered and perhaps for a time of prayer.

Psalm 142 is the prayer of a poor person; it was the favorite psalm of Saint Francis. It traces out a road that goes from lament to praise, from solitude to communion. From the depths of their distress, those who pray the psalm "pour forth" their lament, accepting that the restraining-walls within break down. The soul holds nothing back; it lets its pain and confusion flow out freely before God. This distress is caused in part by the harshness of others, by "persecutors." But still worse is the solitude, the total absence of comprehension and of interest: "There is no one interested in me, no one who cares for my life" (v.5). Those who were close have disappeared.

Then the lamentation becomes prayer, a humble request for liberation by God. And prayer causes a taste for life to return. Saying to God, "you are my portion in the land of the living" (v.6) means refusing to despair, it means still searching for happiness on this earth, in spite of the deepest disappointments. In prayer, I have the assurance that I will sing again. Free, I will give thanks.

Praise brings us from solitude to communion. I thank God for a gift, and I escape from my isolation. A gift received from God overflows, spreads out. When I am filled, I become a seed of communion, I become hospitable: "They shall gather around me, because of your goodness to me" (v.8). Filled with the happiness that comes from God, I will not refuse to share my joy with anyone, even with those who previously ignored or despised me.

- What disappointments have I experienced that could cause me to withdraw into myself?
- How is trust in God expressed in this psalm?
- What gift have I received from God that I can share with others? With whom can I live in communion through a shared joy?

MEDITATING ON THE WORD

OCTOBER

These short readings, taken from the midday prayer in Taizé, can be read several times during the day. The references indicate longer readings. If you have time to read only one, the one in bold type is suggested.

Ep 4.32-5.2 **Lk 24.1-8**
1 SAT Forgive one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Mk 10.2-16 Gn 2.18-24
2 SUN Jesus said: Let the little children come to me; do not stop them, for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.

Ep 5.8-14 Lk 7.24-28
3 MON You have become light in the Lord. Live as children of the light.

Mt 11.25-30 Ga 6.14-18
4 TUE Jesus said: I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for having revealed to little children what you have hidden from the learned and clever.

Lk 7.36-50 Ep 5.17-20
5 WED Jesus said to a woman, "Your sins are forgiven." Those who were present began to say to themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" But Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Ep 6.10-17 Lk 8.4-8
6 THU Draw your strength from God's power. Clothe yourself with the armour of God so that you can resist the tactics of the spirit of evil.

Ep 6.18-20 Lk 8.11-15
7 FRI Pray in the Spirit at all times. Never tire of praying for all God's people.

Phm 4-6 **Jn 15.14-17**
8 SAT Paul writes: May our fellowship in faith lead you to full knowledge of all the good we can accomplish for Christ.

Mk 10.17-30 Ws 7.7-11
9 SUN Jesus said: No one who has left house, brothers, sisters, mother, father, children or land for my sake and for the sake of the Gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age, together with persecutions, and, in the age to come, eternal life.

Ezk 3.10-15 **Lk 8.19-21**
10 MON God said to Ezekiel: Son of man, listen carefully to all my words and take them to heart, then go to your countrymen and speak to them.

Ezk 11.17-20 Lk 8.22-25
11 TUE The Lord says: I will give an undivided heart to my people. I will put a new spirit in them.

Ezk 12.21-28 Lk 8.43-48
12 WED The days are coming when every vision will be fulfilled and there will be no more futile visions or deceptive prophecies, since I, the Lord shall speak what I will. And what I say will come true without delay.

Lk 8.49-56 Ezk 16.60-63
13 THU They came to say to the synagogue ruler, "Your daughter is dead." But Jesus heard and said to him, "Do not be afraid, only have faith and she will be safe."

Lk 9.1-6 Ezk 18.27-32
14 FRI Jesus sent his disciples out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. So they set out and went from village to village, preaching the gospel and healing people everywhere.

Lk 9.46-50 Ex 34.11-12
15 SAT Jesus said: Anyone who welcomes a little child in my name welcomes me; and anyone who welcomes me, welcomes the one who sent me.

Mk 10.35-45 Is 53.10-11
16 SUN Jesus said: The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life to save many.

Ezk 34.12-16 **Lk 9.18-24**
17 MON The Lord says: I will take care of my flock. I shall look for the lost sheep, bring back the strays, bandage the injured and strengthen the sick. I shall watch over the one that is healthy and strong.

Lk 10.1-9 2 Tm 4.9-17
18 TUE St LUKE Jesus said: The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. So pray that the Lord of the harvest may send out workers into his harvest.

Lk 9.57-62 Ezk 34.23-31
19 WED Someone said to Jesus, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus answered, "Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."

Ezk 36.24-28 Lk 10.25-28
20 THU The Lord says: I will give you a new heart. I will remove the heart of stone from your bodies and give you a heart of flesh. I shall put my Spirit in you.

Lk 10.29-37 Ezk 37.1-14
21 FRI Having told the parable of the good Samaritan, Jesus asked the teacher of the law, "Who showed themselves to be a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" He replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

Ezk 37.23-28 **Mt 6.19-21**
22 SAT The Lord says: I shall make a covenant of peace with my people, and it will be an eternal covenant. I shall set my sanctuary among them for ever.

Mk 10.46-52 Jr 31.7-9
23 SUN "What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked a blind man. "Rabbi, I want to see", he replied. And Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has saved you."

Lk 10.38-42 Ezk 39.27-39
24 MON Jesus said to Martha: You are worried and upset about many things, and yet few are needed, indeed only one.

Lk 11.9-13 Ezk 43.4-7
25 TUE Jesus said: Ask, and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you.

Lk 11.27-28 **Hos 11.1-4**
26 WED Jesus said: Happy are they who hear the word of God and obey it.

Lk 12.13-21 Hos 11.7-9
27 THU Jesus said: Be on your guard against every kind of greed; for a person's life does not consist in the abundance of their possessions.

Ep 2.19-22 Lk 6.12-19
28 FRI You are part of God's household. You are built upon the foundations of the apostles and prophets, and Christ Jesus himself is the cornerstone.

Hos 14.2-5 **Lk 12.22-32**
29 SAT The Lord says: I will cure my people of their disloyalty, I shall love them with all my heart.

Mk 12.28b-34 Dt 6.2-6
30 SUN Jesus said: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength. Love your neighbour as yourself. These are the two greatest commandments.

Rm 1.8-17 Lk 12.35-40
31 MON Paul writes: The Gospel is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who has faith.

JOHANNINE HOURS

MATTHEW 8,14-17

Johannine hours are meant as a way of seeking God in silence and prayer in the midst of our daily life. During the course of a day, take an hour or so to read the Bible passage with the short commentary and to reflect on the questions which follow. Afterwards, a group of 3 to 10 people can meet to share what they have discovered and perhaps for a time of prayer.

Often sick people, or their friends or relatives, asked Jesus to cure them. Here Jesus himself, entering the humble home of Peter the fisherman, notices his disciple's mother-in-law lying on a bed in a corner of the room. Everything takes place in silence. The sick woman does not call out, and Jesus heals her without a word. It is the only time in the gospels that Jesus meets someone with no words being spoken. In the mystery of this silence, we already glimpse the figure of the humble servant of God whose "voice is not heard in the streets" (Matt 12,19) and who will not open his mouth in the presence of his accusers (Matt 26,63). And so, the woman he heals also becomes a humble servant. She does not thank Christ with words, but by serving him.

The evening of that same day, many sick people are brought to Jesus. He does not look down upon any of them; he even welcomes those who are "possessed," those whose human dignity is most disfigured. In this passage, we read that Christ did speak. He casts out the evil spirits "with a word." But the quote from the prophet Isaiah that interprets the event emphasizes the silent compassion of Jesus the servant. He takes our weaknesses and bears them. In the languages of the Bible, these two words have a double meaning, signifying also "to remove, to take away." In Christ's compassion, as he takes upon himself our sufferings, the fire of God blazes, removing evil.

- What do I expect from Christ, perhaps without even daring to ask him for it?
- What does Jesus' silence when he meets Peter's mother-in-law suggest to me?
- By what act of service can I thank Christ for the good he has done for me?

The first two parts of this article (*Letter from Taizé*, Dec.-Jan. and June-July) told the story of the relationship between Taizé and the countries of Eastern Europe. Anna and Zsolt wrote: "This history is also in part our own, that of a young Hungarian couple who has been influenced by Taizé for years." To conclude, they now talk about their own personal experience.

Taizé and Eastern Europe

(part three)

We got to know Taizé in Budapest, at the end of the 1970s. But we were only able to visit the community after we were married. We shall never forget our first common prayer in Taizé. What image can express our experience? It was like a fish who had always lived in an aquarium and who suddenly discovered the ocean.

Because of the political situation in our country, we thought we would never have an opportunity to return to Taizé. But no matter, we had seen the ocean; was that not enough to continue?

When we returned home, we wanted to keep the prayer going, first each day as a couple, then every Friday in a group that came into being in Budapest at the beginning of the 1970s, as a result of the contacts with Taizé we mentioned.

This group, which still exists today, received a new lease of life in 1987. That summer, we were able to go back to Taizé. There was much talk about the upcoming European meeting that was going to be held in Rome and a brother asked us if some young Hungarians would take part. We took the question to heart, thinking that it would be possible to organize a trip with two or three coaches. When we returned to Hungary, we spoke about the idea to our friends, who spoke to their friends. We were utterly amazed when, a week later, we had already received more than one thousand registrations! How could we prepare these young people whom we didn't even know? Would they take advantage of their exit visas to stay in the West? These two questions worried us and afterwards we found out that they had also worried the brothers in Taizé when they learned of the great number of registrations.

In order to prepare them for the meeting, we proposed to all the registrants, throughout the autumn, a time of prayer on Friday evening. We organized it as a kind of pilgrimage, going from one church to another. In this way we were able to create links between the people, especially between people from different churches.

The other question remained. A travel agency told us what percentage of Hungarians took advantage of a trip to the West in order to leave the country for good. There was reason to be concerned. Still today we don't know why the government agreed to give so many exit visas: it was still two long years before the fall of the Berlin wall. The last day of the meeting in Rome, as we went from bus to bus before they set out on the return trip, we couldn't believe our eyes: not one of the one thousand Hungarians were missing.

The following year, for the European meeting in Paris, there were twice as many young Hungarians present. Just as in Rome, nobody took advantage of the opportunity to stay in the West.

After that, we felt ready for a meeting in Hungary. We were overjoyed when the bishop of Pécs, the secretary of the Hungarian Bishops' Conference, invited the Taizé Community to organize in his city what the government had already refused twice in previous years. In May 1989, 20,000 young people from the East and the West made the trip to Pécs. It was unheard of for so many young adults from Western Europe to receive permission to come and join us. We spent several months in Pécs to help with preparations for the meeting. Our preparation team had no problem in finding accommodations; the families of Pécs and of the neighbouring villages opened wide their doors. During the meeting the minister of religious affairs, the same one who had forbidden a similar meeting in 1983, resigned. At the time of the meeting in Pécs, too, the dismantling of the iron curtain between Hungary and Austria began.

At Pécs, Brother Roger announced that the next European meeting would take place for the first time in Eastern Europe, in the Polish city of Wroclaw. The old regime was still in place in Poland, but the archbishop of Wroclaw, with whom Taizé brothers had met several times in previous months, had done what was necessary to permit the European meeting to be held in his city.

Later on, we began travelling regularly in Romania. After the European meeting in Wroclaw (1989), we invited the Romanians to join the shuttle-buses that were beginning to make the journey from Budapest to Taizé. And we decided to have a joint week of preparation for this journey. Little by little, contacts increased. At the next European meeting, in Prague (1990), there were 2,500 participants from Romania. In 1991, for the European meeting in Budapest, there were 5,000. It was the first time that many of them ever made friends with young people from other countries, who spoke other languages.

In Transylvania, groups of prayer and sharing soon began to spring up. The Gospel was read in several languages; songs of Taizé were sung, as well as traditional Romanian and Hungarian chants.

At Bucarest, after the European meeting in Prague, young Orthodox Christians, wishing to continue a prayer and to deepen their faith, began to meet every Tuesday in the Orthodox Church of Saint Sylvester. Today often several hundred of them come, participating in a prayer led by the priests of the parish.

In Hungary, we considered it necessary to live out signs of reconciliation among members of our own church. Tensions and divisions are present. How can we try to understand one another and create signs of communion? Preparations for the European meeting in Budapest (1991) were an occasion to visit a great many groups and almost all the parishes of our capital. This was not only in order to find accommodations for the 75,000 participants, but also to reflect with many different groups about the meaning of a European meeting. We also began a daily prayer in a church in the centre of town; it is still going on today.

Anna and Zsolt Balint Budapest
This article first appeared in the October 1993 issue of the journal *Christus*.

Listening to the continents

Colombia

Serving the poor

A young woman from Colombia who spent four months in Taizé had to say this after her return home:

"In the silence of my heart I always thought I was called to be available with a lot of love to go anywhere to offer, with all my limits, a service to the poorest of the poor, to the needy.

At Taizé, the prayer helped me discover a way of being in communion with others, of being open to all. I was there to benefit from the peace of that place and to work with joy at all the simple tasks that allowed me to participate in the life in common. I had left my family and friends, but I gained another family. There I realized that what I had dreamed of for my life was possible and that doubts did not need to worry me. Now I am continuing my journey, with trust and with an authentic conviction concerning my missionary vocation in the world.

Here we are setting up a place for people who wish to prepare themselves to live out an experience of God while serving those who are far from the Church. We have been going forward for eight years, together with a priest, some young people of goodwill and committed lay persons. This centre is being built in one of the poorest zones of our town, with practical workshops to train underprivileged people. There is an inexpensive restaurant for the poor and for children. It is a place where we can pray together and strengthen our life-choice on behalf of the poorest. Our wish is that this place may have an atmosphere of brotherhood and become an authentic school for peace in this area, an area where so often and in so many ways human rights are not respected (hostage takings, murders, violence in families...)."

Sydney

Seeds of trust

Over a period of several months, at the invitation of the New South Wales Ecumenical Council, a meeting was prepared in Sydney as a part of the Pilgrimage of Trust. It was held in late April and more than a thousand young adults took part. The morning programme was in local churches, then, afternoon and evening, everyone gathered in the city centre for common prayer and workshop groups.

The executive secretary of the Ecumenical Council writes: "The Pilgrimage has been a profound moment in the lives of many, many people, and we have been deeply moved by the way in which people have responded. Perhaps the most rewarding have been the contacts with people willing to be involved actively in our programme for the resettlement of refugees."

Keiji and Yuki, a young couple from Japan, were in Sydney for a few weeks helping to prepare the meeting. They write:

"The gathering in Sydney has just ended. But we know it means a new beginning of continuing pilgrimage for everybody who took part. During the preparation, we had already found many signs of hope. Many young Australians are searching for the way to live together in this multi-cultural country. They are trying to make the Gospel concrete in their own situations and in their own commitments. Many of them have understood this gathering as one step for the Church in Australia to open up a way for everyone.

We are happy that so many other young married couples have been involved in the preparation. Working with them, we have realized that marriage is never the end of a our searching, but it really is the beginning of a new journey, in a different form.

It was wonderful to prepare with people from different countries, different churches and different generations. We made visits with a woman from the Philippines, a young man from the USA, and of course with many Australians. This group was a real parable of communion. We have our own backgrounds and living conditions, but we can walk together towards one hope.

It was so beautiful to see people from the different parts of Sydney we had visited all gathered together in the center of the city for the meeting itself. To us it seemed like a kind of miracle! We found those simple visits so meaningful. Even if it is just to say hello, God works through our simple actions and links our hearts together. And then we are no more strangers. And of course we realize, it will be wonderful if we remember to visit people in this way in our own daily life in Japan.

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for myself and for those of my parish it remains in our hearts. Young people in the town, for example, have said they want to continue a meditative prayer together at least once a month. All sorts of people have started coming to it: both parish members as well as those who normally have little to do with the Church. On Good Friday we held a vigil and were surprised to see the church full.

Something has changed in people's mentality. Every year, in our area a lot of foreign workers come — mostly from Eastern European countries — for the hop harvest. Many are prejudiced against them because they are foreigners and look on them simply as "cheap labour". But during the European Meeting, several farming families had young Poles to stay with them and they became so friendly that they've stayed in touch by letter. They've said that they have been invited to go to Poland!

The prayers together were beautiful, because every participant could share their own commitments and burdens with each other in the deepest way, in the communion of Christ. People who work for refugees, those trying to build reconciliation with indigenous people, offered their experience in the times of sharing and the intercessions. We found many forms of human solidarity in the local churches. One church was providing food for the unemployed, another creates opportunities for mentally sick people to come back to society through working in their cafe. We have learned many suggestions which will help us live in our own local church at home."

Letter from Taizé

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